

February 7, 2006

FEB 27 2006 000220

Mr. Lester Snow
Director
Department of Water Resources
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, CA 94236-0001

RE: South Delta Improvements Program

Dear Mr. Snow:

The Santa Clara Valley Water District (District) has reviewed the South Delta Improvements Program (SDIP) Draft Environmental Impact Report/Statement (Draft EIR/EIS) and has the following comments, in addition to those provided through the State Water Contractors which are hereby incorporated.

The District provides wholesale water supply and watershed management to 1.7 million residents of Santa Clara County and to the vital high-tech economy known as "Silicon Valley." On average, half of the County's water supply must be imported from the Bay-Delta watershed through the State Water Project and Central Valley Project. The District's Integrated Water Management Plan includes substantial local investments in water use efficiency, recycled water, and groundwater management. However, ensuring the reliability of the county's water supply also depends on protecting and restoring the reliability of water imported from the Bay-Delta watershed.

The SDIP is a key component of broader State and federal actions described in the CALFED Record of Decision to improve the Bay-Delta ecosystem, water quality and water supply. Analyses in the Draft EIR/EIS indicate that SDIP will protect migrating salmon, maintain water levels for South Delta agricultural water users, and improve water circulation and quality in the South Delta through the installation of permanent operable tidal gates in Stage 1.

One area that District staff has reviewed in particular is the modeling of potential water quality impacts in Clifton Court Forebay, since South Bay Aqueduct deliveries are directly affected by water quality in this area. Based on monthly averaged data the Draft EIR/EIS shows a slight degradation in salinity, more related to Stage 2 than Stage 1. We appreciate the two-stage decision-making process presented in the Draft EIR/EIS, and the commitment to additional environmental review prior to Stage 2, so that modeling tools and studies can be refined to better understand any potential water quality impacts.

Overall, we believe that the SDIP will provide important operational flexibility for both the Delta environment and water users, and support continued progress in coordination with a long-term vision for a sustainable Delta.

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We appreciate the helpfulness of Department of Water Resources staff in our review of the Draft EIR/EIS. If you have any questions, please contact me at 408 265 2600, extension 2073.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joan Maher". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Joan Maher
Imported Water Unit Manager